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Articles in Today's Clips Tuesday, February 6, 2007

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<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
*Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	2-14
Juvenile Justice	15-18
Homelessness	19-20
Health Care	21-24
Housing	25-26
Energy Assistance	27-29
Child Care	30-32
Fatherhood	33
State Aid	34-35
Budget	36
State of the State	37-39
News Releases	40-42



Trial is ordered for foster mother

February 6, 2007

BY JACK KRESNAK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

As she was bound over for trial Monday in the death of 2-year-old Isaac Lethbridge, his former foster mother said she tried to protect the boy and his death was "an unfortunate accident."

Charlsie Adams-Rogers, 59, will stand trial on charges of involuntary manslaughter and child abuse.

The boy died of a beating in her Detroit home Aug. 16, law enforcement officials say. They have not identified who beat and burned Isaac, although Adams-Rogers has blamed her 12-year-old adopted daughter.

"I did everything I possibly could to protect those children," Adams-Rogers said after Monday's preliminary examination in 36th District Court in Detroit. "It was an unfortunate accident."

She was referring to Isaac and his 4-year-old sister, who entered Michigan's foster care system together on Sept. 19, 2005, after being neglected in their parents' filthy Westland home. The two were then placed in three troubled foster homes by the Lula Belle Stewart Center.

After getting the two June 29, Adams-Rogers took them to doctors three times and expressed concerns about their "easy bruise-ability," according to testimony before District Judge Willie Lipscomb Jr.

Dr. Sherapartap Rai, a physician who saw Isaac on Aug. 4 -- about two weeks before the boy was found unresponsive in Adams-Rogers' home -- testified that the boy seemed to be happy and attached to his foster mother, though he noted bruises on the boy and wrote "suspected physical abuse" in his medical file.

Rai also said Adams-Rogers told him that although she liked caring for children, Isaac and his sister were "more trouble than good."

Assistant Wayne County Medical Examiner Dr. Boguslaw Pietak testified that Isaac died of multiple blunt-force injuries to his head and body as well as second-degree burns to his abdomen and chest. Pietak said the burns seemed to be consistent with someone pressing a hot iron against the child.

Adams-Rogers' attorney, Warren Harris, said she was a caring foster mother; no one had said she abused any child.

But Lipscomb scolded Adams-Rogers because, he said, she had a legal and moral duty to protect the foster children in her care. He described Isaac's injuries as "shocking" and said it was "almost as if this child had been tortured."

Lipscomb agreed with Assistant Prosecutor Lisa Lindsey's request that a child abuse charge involving Isaac's sister be reduced to a misdemeanor.

Adams-Rogers is free on bond pending arraignment. .

Contact **JACK KRESNAK** at 313-223-4544 or jkresnak@freepress.com.

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Detroit News Wayne Briefs

February 6, 2007

Detroit: Foster mom to be tried in death

A Detroit woman who provided a foster home for 2-year-old Isaac Lethbridge was ordered to stand trial for his death Monday. Charlsie Adams-Rogers, 59, faces up to 15 years in prison on involuntary manslaughter and child-abuse charges following the Aug. 16 death of Issac, who died of blunt force and multiple burns. Willie G. Lipscomb Jr., a 36th District Court judge, set a Feb. 12 arraignment after concluding there's enough evidence for a trial. She also faces a fourth-degree child abuse charge, which alleges she also harmed Issac's sister, who was living with her. After the hearing, Adams-Rogers called the death an "unforeseeable accident."

[Return to regular web page](#)

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February 6, 2007

911 call: Mom was in 'deep ends of hell'

Mother charged in daughters' slayings; cops say she chased girls with knife.

George Hunter and Steve Pardo / The Detroit News

MACOMB TOWNSHIP -- Something snapped inside Jennifer Kukla.

Beset by money problems, the 30-year-old single mother who worked at McDonald's in Macomb Township was afraid protective services would take her kids, neighbors and family members said.

During a call to 911 on Sunday night, one of Kukla's sisters told police, "She said she was going to the deep ends of hell. She said ... she was hypnotized. She said, 'I think I kidnapped them. I think I ate people.' "

Police said Kukla did the unthinkable that morning -- grabbing a large kitchen knife and chasing her two young daughters through their small trailer home on a killing spree. Kukla was charged Monday in 41-A District Court in Shelby Township on two counts of first-degree murder.

Investigators said the terrified girls ran into the back bedroom as their mother chased them.

They said Kukla first caught up to her oldest daughter, 8-year-old Alexandria, and slit her throat several times.

Five-year-old Ashley ran into the kitchen. Her mother caught her and slit her throat, too, according to police.

Officers say Kukla then fatally stabbed the three family dogs inside their kennels.

Next, she killed the girls' pet mouse inside its small cage.

Then, Kukla sat in the trailer with the bodies for several hours, until a concerned sister came to check on her, investigators said.

Investigators say the events that took place at 7:30 a.m. Sunday in the Hometown Macomb mobile home park on M-59 near Card were among the most gruesome crime scenes they've ever seen.

Kukla confessed to police the grisly details, Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel said.

"She indicated to us that she killed her kids," Hackel said. "She told us she killed the older girl first, then the younger one. You can only imagine what those poor little girls were thinking at the time," Hackel said.

On Monday, Magistrate Michael Osaer denied Kukla bond. A not guilty plea was entered on her behalf; she was not represented by an attorney.

When Osaer set a preliminary examination date for Feb. 20 -- what would have been Ashley's sixth birthday -- Kukla and other family members began wailing. Kukla repeatedly begged, "Please, not that day. Not that day."

Osaer reset the exam for Feb. 15.

The killings first came to police attention on Sunday at 6:18 p.m., with the call to 911 from Kukla's sister. Her name was not made public.

The woman had gone to Kukla's trailer Saturday night to help her clean, and she returned the next day to check on her.

"She was alarmed at some of the statements Kukla made," Hackel said.

When police arrived at the mobile home park, they found the two girls lying on a mattress in a rear bedroom of the trailer. Their throats had been slit numerous times, Macomb County Medical Examiner Daniel Spitz said.

"She has indicated that she heard voices, but that's not tantamount to insanity," Macomb County Assistant Prosecutor William Cataldo said. "There is no rhyme or reason for evil, and this was evil. If she is insane, that will be determined by the court. But we're pursuing first-degree murder charges, because we believe the facts will show this was premeditated."

Kukla's other sister, Elizabeth Lawrie, said her sister had been under a lot of pressure.

"She was losing everything," Lawrie said. "She is not the person they're talking about. There's a history of medical problems in my family."

Alexandria's and Ashley's fathers, one who is in prison and the other one who has had minimal contact with his daughter, were notified about their daughters' deaths, Hackel said.

Residents of the mobile home park on Monday were trying to process what happened.

Tim Chambe, whose 8-year-old son played with the girls, said Kukla came over Saturday night around 8:15 p.m.

"She came to my house looking for water to flush her toilet," he said. "She was just in my house petting my dog."

Chambe said the heat had been out in Kukla's mobile home. He gave her clothes and food for the girls Friday. "They didn't even get a chance to wear those clothes," he said.

The last time Lane Smith saw his neighbor was Saturday morning when he let his dog out. "I know she had some hard times trying to pay her bills," said Smith. "But the kids were always happy."

He said the two girls often took his golden retriever for a walk. The girls also enjoyed Rollerblading around the neighborhood, he said.

Smith said sometimes the girls would ask him for fruit.

"She worked at McDonald's, and it seemed the girls had McDonald's for dinner a lot," he said.

A makeshift memorial was erected against a tree next to Kukla's mobile home Monday night, Chambe said.

Detroit News Staff Writer Joe Menard contributed to this report. You can reach George Hunter at (586) 468-7396 or

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Funeral fund

The Warren Bank has set up a fund to pay for the funerals of Alexandria and Ashley, according to the AP. Send donations to 38880 Garfield Road, Clinton Township, MI 48038

[Return to regular web page](#)



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Published February 6, 2007

Woman charged in fatal stabbings of daughters

Shelby Twp. mother admitted to killing two girls, police say

By Sven Gustafson
Associated Press

SHELBY TWP. - A suburban Detroit woman, who police said was hearing voices, was charged Monday in the stabbing deaths of her young daughters inside their mobile home.

Jennifer Kukla was arraigned on two counts of first-degree murder in the deaths of Alexandria, 8, and Ashley, 5. If convicted as charged, Kukla, a 30-year-old resident of Macomb Township, faces a penalty of life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Police say Kukla acknowledged killing her daughters and that alcohol might have been a factor.

Police, who were called to the home by Kukla's sister about 6 p.m. Sunday also found three dead Pomeranian dogs stacked atop one another inside a cage, as well as a dead pet mouse.

They have no motive for the deaths, which they say occurred about 7 a.m. Sunday.

According to a 911 tape, a woman, who county Sheriff Mark Hackel would only say was a younger sister of Kukla, told an emergency dispatcher that she was afraid to go inside the home.

"She says that she killed her kids, and I'm not going into the house with her because she stabbed her arm and she's bleeding all over the place," the woman said. "I'm not going in there because it's not safe. What if she gets me?"

Kukla told the magistrate that she had a prior arrest for driving with a suspended license but never had been treated for mental illness. She was ordered held without bond.

The magistrate at the Shelby Township district court where Kukla was arraigned Monday afternoon initially set a date of Feb. 20 for her next court appearance.

At the mention of that date, Kukla and her sister, Elizabeth Lawrie, who was in attendance, both shouted out, saying that date was Ashley's birthday.

The magistrate then switched the date to Feb. 15.



(Photo by Paul Sancya/Associated Press)
Toy tribute: A teddy bear sits outside the home of Jennifer Kukla, who was arraigned Monday on two counts of first-degree murder in the deaths of her daughters.

THE DAILY OAKLAND PRESS

Mother accused of killing 2 girls heard 'voices'

Of Journal Register News Service

Police couldn't explain Monday what motivated a mother accused of killing her two children and her pets this past weekend.

What the driving force behind the crime might be and whether it can form the basis of any legal defense remain to be seen as court proceedings unfold.

A disheveled Jennifer Anne Kukla, 30, appeared Monday for arraignment at 41A District Court on two counts of first-degree murder in the stabbing deaths of Alexandria Marie Kukla, 8, and half-sister Ashley Kukla, 5, on Sunday morning inside the Hometown Macomb mobile home park in Macomb Township. Magistrate Michael Osaer ordered Kukla held without bond and originally scheduled a preliminary exam for Feb. 20, until Kukla and her distraught sister objected in court that the date would coincide with Ashley Kukla's 6th birthday. Osaer agreed to reschedule the hearing for Feb. 15.

"The person in court was not the person I was raised with. She is not that Jennifer," said Elizabeth Lawrie of Clinton Township, a sister of Kukla and aunt of the two victims.

Lawrie also said Monday that her sister comes from a family with a history of mental illness and that her sister also had been concerned in recent days that social workers from Child Protective Services might remove the children from her home. But police and court officials said they found no documented psychiatric treatment for Kukla.

"From what we understand, she's not had any history of psychological problems," said William Cataldo, chief of homicides for Macomb County prosecutors. "This (case) was just a matter of being in the presence of evil."

Although officials differ on the order of events, it's believed that sometime around 7:30 a.m. Sunday, Kukla took four carving knives or butcher blades and dealt multiple stab wounds to the neck regions of both girls, as well as three family dogs and a tiny white mouse kept in a cage.

Before the case proceeds to trial, police will require extensive lab testing on the four blades to determine which was used to kill which victims, Cataldo said.

"There's not much in the way of (defensive) wounds consistent with fighting off an attacker," said Macomb County Medical Examiner Daniel Spitz. "But I would doubt they were asleep at the time or anything. One of the girls was wearing an outdoor winter coat when she was brought for examination."

An autopsy determined that both girls died of multiple stab wounds to the neck region that apparently damaged "vitals," such as the windpipe or arteries and veins, Spitz said. Cataldo and Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel also said the evidence suggests the girls were awake in the early morning hours and "knew what was happening" to them.

"In terms of the time required for premeditation, I'll just say there's evidence from the scene that at some point there was a chase through the house," Cataldo said.

Hackel explained that police only became aware of the crime some 11 hours later, around 6 p.m. Sunday, when another sister of Kukla's stopped by the home to check on her, only to have Kukla emerge from the house and claim the children were hurt. That sister then called 9-1-1.

"She'd come over to help clean up the house the day before and left later that night. But she was concerned about her (Kukla) based on some remarks she apparently made the day before, so when she stopped by again she found the door open," Hackel explained. "When she called for her sister, (Kukla) came out of the house and told her only that she had harmed her children."

The mobile home park is on M-59, east of Romeo Plank Road.

Court records and Kukla's relatives also indicate the family was beset by some severe financial hardships in recent months, but Cataldo and Hackel insist there is no evidence of money being a motive behind the crimes. They both said Monday that Kukla made many statements about the crime, however, and claimed she had been hearing "voices" telling her to harm the family.

Records and relatives indicate the children have two fathers - Paul Hein of Clinton Township and Jeffrey Lenn Brownlow, 44, who is lodged at Carson City Correctional Facility, serving 18 months to four years in prison for violating probation and absconding from parolee supervision on a past conviction for failure to pay child support and operating a vehicle while impaired.

But Kevin Lynch, Brownlow's attorney in that matter, said he was unfamiliar with the Kukla family and that the child support matter involves another child who is already grown. Hackel said Monday that police made contact with both fathers' families about the incident, though neither was particularly involved in the children's lives.

Court records indicate Hein had been the subject of a prosecution by the paternity/child support unit of the county prosecutor's office, but had recently been back to court this past fall to have his support lowered or modified in the 1999 case.

Kukla had been working at a McDonald's at 23 Mile Road and Romeo Plank in Clinton Township until recently, and officials also said her home had been without running water for at least some time before the crimes.

Kukla also will require a court-appointed attorney to defend her in the criminal case, and family members were asking for financial support to help with funeral costs for the Kukla children Monday.

"If she had just called me to come up, I would have been happy to take care of them for her for a while," said a tearful Lawrie.

A manager at the McDonald's location declined to comment on Kukla or the crimes and referred media inquiries to an operations manager who issued a prepared statement.

"The incident that occurred this past weekend was truly unfortunate," operations manager John O'Neil said in the statement. "Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family and friends of the victims during this difficult time."

Anyone wishing to help the family with funeral expenses can contribute to the "Alexandria and Ashley Memorial Fund," c/o Warren Bank, 38880 Garfield Road, Clinton Township, MI 48038.

Funeral arrangements were still pending as of late Monday.
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www.record-eagle.com

02/06/2007

Father is charged after baby dies

BY VICTOR SKINNER

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KINGSLEY — A Kingsley man faces a murder charge after he allegedly shook his 2-month-old son hard enough that the infant died days later.

Anthony Curtis Bishop, 21, was arraigned Monday on a charge of homicide-felony murder after he allegedly admitted to Grand Traverse Sheriff's detectives that he became frustrated with his son and shook the child violently Friday afternoon, Grand Traverse County Sheriff Scott Fewins said.

Bishop faces life in prison without the chance of parole if convicted. He was in the county jail on \$500,000 cash or surety bond Monday. Emergency personnel took the child to Munson Medical Center where he was stabilized before being flown to DeVos Children's Hospital in Grand Rapids. The infant, Cole Curtis Bishop, died in Grand Rapids Sunday morning.

"There are certain signs that occur after a violent shaking and they started to become more noticeable and then confirmed with testing at DeVos," Fewins said. "Our two detectives took (Bishop) off to the side ... where the father admitted that he got frustrated and shook the child violently. He realized almost right away that something went wrong."

Doctors with DeVos Children's Hospital said a single violent event caused severe injuries to Cole Bishop's brain, including subdural hematoma or bleeding near the brain, court records indicate.

Sheriff's detectives arrested Bishop in Grand Rapids for first-degree child abuse and drove him to Grand Traverse County jail Saturday night, Fewins said. He was charged with murder Monday.

Bishop was allegedly watching his two children by himself at their Kingsley home when first responders took the emergency distress call around 3:45 p.m. Friday. Bishop's oldest son, 2, was not harmed and is staying with his grandparents. The mother of the children was at work when the alleged abuse occurred, Fewins said.

Emergency medical staff first noticed possible signs of abuse when they transported the infant to Munson Medical Center.

"What they were noticing was blood in both the baby's mouth and in the nose," Fewins said.

The alleged abuse became more apparent in Grand Rapids.

"The swelling starts to take place and there is a change of the eyes that takes place after a while. This is something that would not have been as visible at Munson as it was at DeVos."

Bishop's lawyer, Robert S. Whims, said Bishop is "devastated," but would not comment on the specifics of

the case.

"We are gathering facts right now," Whims said. "I do know that a tragedy has happened. It is just a question of how it occurred and what are the circumstances."

The infant's official cause of death is expected to be released after an autopsy scheduled for today.

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Boy told to lie about abuse

Tuesday, February 06, 2007

By Steven Hepker

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A 6-year-old boy who police said was hit 100 times on his buttocks testified Monday that his mother and her live-in boyfriend told him to lie about his injuries to his father.

"They wanted me to say I was sick and couldn't come over," the Jackson boy said. "They didn't want him to see my arm, my head and my bum."

Jeannine Nyies, 30, and Ian Anderson, 32, are the first in Jackson County charged with torture. They also are charged with first-degree child abuse. Anderson's trial started Monday, and Nyies will be tried later this winter.

Foote Hospital doctors testified the boy could have died of infection without intensive medical treatment of wounds to his scalp and buttocks. A family friend tipped police Aug. 9 after she saw the boy for the first time in weeks.

"He had no expression whatsoever," Shirley Headley testified.

Dr. Kimberly Aiken, a Foote Express Care doctor, said the boy was oozing puss from a head wound, his left arm was limp, and it appeared he had severely burned and infected buttocks.

"His underwear was actually stuck to his rear end," she said.

The boy was in such extreme pain that he could not lie on his back, and doctors had to use morphine to settle him enough to remove the underwear from the large, open sores on his rear.

"Even with the morphine, it was an uncomfortable and painful surgery for him," said Dr. Gregory Baumann, a Foote emergency room doctor.

Doctors said the boy was steadfast in his claim he was hurt falling down stairs at his home on Carr Street.

Clutching a pair of stuffed animals, the boy Monday implicated "Jeannine and Ian." He corrected Assistant Prosecutor Susan Beebe several times that he considers his stepmother, Sara, his mother, and not Nyies.

"They used a wooden spoon and a spatula," the boy said of disciplinary tools.

Beebe alleges the couple made the boy stand on his toes in a corner, beat him, tied him up and placed him in a dark basement.

Police said both Nyies and Anderson implicated themselves.

Later, Beebe played for Circuit Judge John McBain's court an interview Detective Judy Tomlin videotaped with Anderson.

"We both spanked him, but I spanked him a lot more," Anderson said. "Me and her were going crazy. We snapped. There is no excuse for it."

Defense attorney Wendell Jacobs argues that Anderson's alleged involvement does not fit the legal definition of torture or first-degree child abuse.

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Article published Feb 6, 2007

Blankets comfort children in crisis

By Dan Meisler

DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

Pamela Marie Heggie of Oceola Township is on a mission to provide local children who are sick or in bad family situations something she didn't have as a kid — the comfort and security of a hand-made quilt or blanket.

As the coordinator of the county chapter of Project Linus, a national group that makes and distributes blankets to ill and traumatized children, Heggie is working with social service and law enforcement agencies to find children who could use a little comfort. So far, the county group has delivered more than 100 blankets.

She's known how to sew for a long time, but Heggie only recently got into quilting. But she said she's hooked, and has found a great way to serve the community.

"When people say they have a calling, for the first time I understood what that was," she said.

Heggie, 36, was born in South Korea and moved to the United States as an infant. But she didn't have a completely happy childhood — she said she suffered physical and sexual abuse as a girl, and didn't have much support to get her through those experiences.

"I didn't really have anybody to talk to," she said, and even having a simple thing like a blanket would have helped.

"I think if I had had one, it would have been a great comfort," Heggie said.

Married with two children, Heggie has lived in her home on a lake near Howell since 1995. But before that, she moved around a lot. She said she recently counted up 25 different places she's lived in southeastern Michigan.

Now that she's settled down, however, she's able to devote a fair amount of time to Project Linus, despite working a full-time job in Ann Arbor and taking care of two young daughters.

Because of a pain condition that was only recently diagnosed, Heggie sleeps just two or three hours a night — and much of the rest of her evening she spends making blankets. She also has help from many volunteers and businesspeople who have donated materials.

"We're always looking for more volunteers," she said. "The support from the county has been wonderful."

Project Linus partners with LACASA, the Women's Resource Center, a local child psychologist and, most recently, the Livingston County Sheriff's Department, Heggie said.

The group makes three types of blankets — one-piece fleece blankets; crocheted or knitted blankets; and traditional patchwork quilts. Recipients include cancer patients or survivors of domestic violence.

Heggie never actually meets the children who receive the blankets, but said she doesn't really mind that. One day, however, at a drug store, the cashier noticed her Project Linus pin and mentioned that she had gotten one of the blankets.

"I don't need that face-to-face," she said. "Just knowing is enough."

And how long does she plan to keep making and giving blankets to needy children?

"Until I can't," she said.

Contact Daily Press & Argus reporter Dan Meisler at (517) 552-2857 or dmeisler@gannett.com.



Juvenile center chief quits; attacks and drugs reported

February 6, 2007

BY JACK KRESNAK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A spate of assaults on detainees and staff at the Wayne County Juvenile Detention Facility -- combined with marijuana found in the possession of several incarcerated youths -- prompted a security review, a weekend sweep of the building by drug-sniffing dogs and the resignation Monday of the center's director.

Three 17-year-olds -- two of them facing murder trials in adult court -- were transferred out of the center and into the Wayne County Jail on Friday, a few hours after the Free Press began asking questions about their actions, according to Sue Hamilton-Smith, director of the Wayne County Department of Children and Family Services.

The three are among a half-dozen older boys who have assaulted other youths and staff members and are suspected of possessing marijuana inside the maximum-security building in downtown Detroit, said Hamilton-Smith, whose department oversees the center.

"We're real serious about our mission that this be a safe, secure and humane facility for the young people in our care," Hamilton-Smith said Monday after asking the Wayne County Sheriff's Office for help with drug-sniffing dogs to find the source of the marijuana. No drugs were found in the Saturday morning sweep.

Hamilton-Smith said late Monday that George Bascom, the facility director for nearly two years, had resigned because of the recent problems. He could not be reached for comment.

Assaults and injuries

Assaults at the center have been rising, with 36 reported in January alone, Hamilton-Smith said.

Five employees are on medical leave for assault-related problems. At least two youths were taken recently to Children's Hospital of Michigan for emergency treatment. None of the youths was seriously injured, Hamilton-Smith said.

Cornelius Jett, 17, of River Rouge, who spent two weeks in the detention center last month after being detained by police for running away from home, said he was attacked at the center.

After spending one day in an orientation unit, Jett was assigned to a second-floor area where, he said, he was threatened for sitting on a couch without permission.

Jett said he got off the couch and, a few minutes later, as he watched a basketball game in the gym, he was struck from behind.

"When I turned around, another big guy grabbed me from behind and the whole group just rushed up and started punching me in the face," Jett said. "I blacked out. The staff said they drug me down the bleachers and everything. I couldn't remember anything. The next thing I knew, I was walking down the hallway spitting out blood."

Jett was taken to Children's Hospital where a doctor stitched the inside of his lip. Some of his teeth are loose, he said. He was released two weeks ago and all charges were dismissed.

In talking to staff and other youths after the attack, Jett said he was told that the attack was orchestrated by someone "who was in for murder."

"He told the rest of the guys basically what to do," Jett said.

The odor of pot

Two of the three youths transferred to jail Friday -- Jamari Wilson and Randall Derr, both 17, of Detroit and facing murder charges -- were among four youths who on Jan. 18 were caught in the detention center with a marijuana cigarette and a lighter.

Tadarial Sturdivant, the former Michigan State Police director who has been a deputy director of the county children and family department since June 29, said procedures on searching youths returning from court had been strengthened.

But last Wednesday, a staff person smelled marijuana smoke coming from a restroom and found that a 17-year-old inside apparently tried to cover the smell by spraying an air freshener. Youths are not allowed to have aerosol spray cans, illegal drugs or matches and lighters.

No marijuana was found on the youth, Sturdivant said.

Then on Friday, a staff person smelled marijuana in the center's art room. None was found, but officials took urine samples from those in the room to test for the drug.

The assaults and drug issues come as officials are working to correct problems cited by a licensing consultant from the state Department of Human Services. The center's license was downgraded to provisional in July because of crowding, but other problems came up in December during the consultant's follow-up visit.

The provisional license was extended another six months.

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[Return to regular web page](#)



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February 6, 2007

Macomb County

Juvenile center touts its successes

After years of reprimands, allegations of abuse, it seeks accreditation to show it has turned around.

Jim Lynch / The Detroit News

MOUNT CLEMENS -- As recently as two years ago, Macomb County's Juvenile Justice Center faced licensing problems, allegations of abuse and other issues.

This month, however, county officials are pursuing a special accreditation for the center from the American Correctional Association -- a rare designation that would mark a major turnaround. If approved, it would be the only county-run facility in the state with such a designation, officials say.

Charles Seidelman, the Juvenile Justice Center's director, on Monday filed his 2006 report on the state of the center with county officials.

"We're in a position now where we can look to achieve the highest possible standards," Seidelman said.

"If we get accredited, we'll be able to stand up in front of the public and say we're doing things the right way. "

Three years after a \$19 million overhaul of the building, Macomb County's Juvenile Justice Center has 120 beds for young offenders. Last year, it housed a total of 2,400 juveniles.

From 2002 through 2005, the center, then known as the Macomb County Youth Home, received several reprimands from the state after poor reviews. Often, the staff had not been trained properly and, in some instances, the home did not have written policies for important issues.

In addition, juvenile inmates complained of abuse at the hands of other inmates as well as employees.

Commissioner Phil DiMaria, D-Eastpointe, was among the county officials who helped initiate major changes at the justice center, even calling for changes in leadership at the time.

"This is exactly the direction we wanted to see the Juvenile Justice Center go in," he said. "It's what we hoped for for the past two years."

The American Correctional Association says the benefits of accreditation include improved staff training and development, defense against lawsuits, a safer environment for staff and inmates, and reduced liability insurance costs.

Seidelman said the accreditation process will likely take two years and will cover the center's residential treatment program as well as its detention facilities.

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[Return to regular web page](#)

Detroit Free Press Macomb County news brief

February 6, 2007

COUNTY-WIDE: Juvenile justice center is busier

The Macomb County Juvenile Justice Center held more youths last year, according to a report issued to county commissioners Monday.

The center in Mt. Clemens housed 2,401 in 2006, up from 2,171 in 2005. The average length of stay remained at 13 days.

Juvenile justice officials attribute the increase to the addition of a floor in August 2006, which allowed the center to offer more treatment programs.

The additional floor also enabled the center to separate juveniles sent for detention and those seeking treatment. As a result, staff morale is higher and youth complaints are down, according to the report by the center's director, Charles Seidelman.

Commissioners reviewed the report at a Justice and Public Safety Committee meeting.



Shelters can't keep up in winter chill

Not enough room for homeless as need rises.

PUBLISHED: February 6, 2007

By Frank DeFrank
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Misty Authier, director of the Salvation Army's MATTS shelter in Warren, knows it's simple math: too many homeless people, not enough beds.

But when the temperature dips to life-threatening levels, telling folks she has no more room at her 50-bed shelter is hard.

"I'm full year-round," said Authier. "But now, we're having to turn away many more."

Authier estimates all Macomb County shelters combined can handle barely more than 200 people. The homeless population is about five times that amount, she said.

"We have way more homeless people than beds," she said.

With the first real cold snap of the winter in full force, the danger of weather-related health threats moves to the forefront.

At 1 p.m. Monday, the temperature at Selfridge Air National Guard Base in Harrison Township was 10 degrees, according to the National Weather Service. But when an 18 mph wind is factored in, the air felt 18 degrees colder, at -8 degrees.

"It (wind chill) is something you have to take into account," said Dr. James Larkin, chairman of emergency medicine at the Mount Clemens Regional Medical Center.

"It's very serious if you're out in the cold."

Skin exposed to sub-zero temperatures can become frostbitten quickly and prolonged exposure can cause more severe problems like hypothermia, when the body temperature drops to 95 degrees or colder, Larkin said.

But those who must be outside -- to work, for example -- should make sure they're properly dressed. The age-old adage about dressing in "layers" is solid advice, Larkin said, and one segment of the population in particular must take care to avoid exposure.

"It affects the elderly even more," he said.

Dr. Jennifer Stevenson, an emergency room physician at St. Joseph's Medical Center in Clinton Township, said the best way to avoid cold-weather related ailments is the most obvious: "Just stay out of the elements," she said.

But those who do venture out need to recognize potential danger signs. People who experience numbness, tingling or outright pain, especially in fingers and toes, should come in from the cold immediately, Stevenson said.

"And you don't want to warm up (fingers or toes) with hot tap water," she cautioned. "You've got to use a more tepid temperature."

The cold weather, and problems it can cause, prompted most school officials to tell students to stay home Monday.

In Roseville, that meant Superintendent John Kment approved the first "snow day" in three years, even though snow wasn't the problem.

"About 50 percent of our kids walk (to school)," Kment said.

Kment said superintendents from all over Macomb County burn the telephone wires "most of the night until a decision is made."

"We try to make the decision as early as we can," he said.

Still, part of the protocol is to assign custodians to stand in front of school buildings to alert parents who haven't gotten the word.

Several districts announced early Monday plans to close up for Tuesday, too. Those included Warren Woods and all Roseville, East Detroit and St. Clair Shores schools.

The weather forecast for the rest of the week offers little hope for relief. The National Weather Service calls for high temperatures in the teens or low-20s through Friday with overnight lows dipping close to zero.

Click here to return to story:

http://www.macombdaily.com/stories/020607/loc_20070206016.shtml

Looking At Michigan's Medicaid Migraine

MIRS, February 5, 2007

One out of every four dollars the state spends from the General Fund is spent on Medicaid — yet Medicaid remains a program that has proven difficult to prune back.

In total (both federal and state funds combined) providing Medicaid coverage in Michigan costs nearly \$9 billion, according to the House Fiscal Agency (HFA). Presently, the program provides the medical safety net for 1.5 million low-income residents. More than one-third of the 127,500 births in Michigan in 2005 and two-thirds of the 43,000 long-term care patients in nursing homes in Michigan are financed through Medicaid.

Medicaid's growth over the past six years has been nothing short of breathtaking. The HFA briefing noted that since the onset of the current recession, the Medicaid caseload has grown 33.7 percent to a record-high 1,490,384 in 2006. Last September, the number of enrollees had exceeded 1.5 million covered residents. Over the past six years the cost of providing Medicaid in Michigan has grown by \$2.5 billion (combined federal/state cost).

In the six years prior to the onset of the current recession, the number of Medicaid beneficiaries had fallen by six percent, primarily due to the welfare reforms of the mid 1990s and a robust economy that led to a nearly 70 percent reduction in public assistance recipients who automatically qualify for Medicaid.

The actual cost for the program has increased by 43.9 percent in the last six years. The prior six-year period saw Medicaid costs rise by 26.8 percent.

According to Paul **REINHART**, director of the state's Medicaid program, these cost increases related to rising caseloads are, to some degree, being mitigated by what is a very efficient program.

"If we compare ourselves on a per person basis, we're the lowest [cost state for Medicaid] in the Great Lakes region," Reinhart told *MIRS*. "On a per person basis, we spend less than any of our peer states."

On a national basis, Michigan's Medicaid program ranks in the bottom third in terms of per capita cost, yet it offers a sophisticated range of services by comparison. The reason, Michigan has 950,000 of its 1.5 million Medicaid recipients enrolled in managed care.

Reinhart noted that a testament to the state's efficiency is the fact that in Fiscal Year (FY) 2006, the per capita cost of the program rose 0.8 percent. Far below the double digit increases most private sector health care plans saw.

While the program continues to mushroom in total size, the HFA report noted that several federal policy changes are pushing more of the cost of Medicaid to the states. For example, in the past, states were able to use creative financing mechanisms to earn extra federal Medicaid revenue. Michigan had used those creative mechanisms to save the state more than \$700 million a year at one point.

The feds have been pushing to reduce the use of these mechanisms. The result, by FY 2006 special financing payments totaled less than \$200 million and the HFA reports that such funding is at risk of further reductions in the future.

So while costs are booming due to rising caseloads money supporting the program coming from the federal government is shrinking.

It's not as if the state hasn't tried trimming the program. The HFA report listed \$904.8 million in savings (\$393.3 million GF) that have been generated from past changes.

Bill **FAIRGRIEVE**, deputy director of the House Fiscal Agency and one of the authors of a HFA brief on the subject, said the ways for the state to prune back the cost of the program are fairly limited.

"There are things the state can try do, and they fall in three categories," explained Fairgrieve.

It can:

- Reduce the number of people using the service by eliminating eligibility groups, i.e. cut people off the program and try to put on some types of limits on the utilization of Medicaid, which are difficult things to do in an economic downturn
- Limit the range of services you provide. Recall in 2002, Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** ended non-emergency adult dental care, hearing aids, podiatric and chiropractic care to save \$9 to \$10 million. That was eventually restored in 2006.
- You can limit what you pay providers. This option can push doctors and other providers to simply opt-out of covering Medicaid patients, something that could eventually limit access to health care.

There are roughly \$1 billion in services that are so-called optional services that the state provides that aren't required under federal rules. The problem is that \$1 billion is made up of roughly 56 percent federal dollars. So, if you cut all the optional services, the state would save some \$400 million in General Fund.

Fairgrieve noted the \$400 million in GF savings can't be counted as a straight-up savings as the state seeks to solve a current year \$800 million budget deficit.

"That's just the dollar value if you no longer provided the services," he noted. "What you can't say is if that is really going to be a savings." He noted that what isn't known is if a service is no longer covered, a covered resident could wind up getting the condition treated through a Medicaid covered emergency room visit.

Reinhart said that what may be labeled "optional" in a program that was crafted in the 1960s, really isn't optional today. For example, he pointed out that under federal definitions covering medications is "optional."

Yes, the state could eliminate pharmaceutical coverage for Medicaid recipients and save \$1 billion, but the act of ending such coverage would balloon long-term Medicaid costs pushing the state further into the red.

"What happens a week after a diabetic stoops getting insulin?" Reinhart asked. They wind up in diabetic coma in the emergency room.

So, where the state realized a savings of tens of dollars a month refusing to provide insulin to the diabetic Medicaid enrollee, within days it would be on the hook for thousands of dollars in hospital care.

Another major so-called "optional service" is mental health services. T.J. **BUCHOLZ**, spokesman for the Department of Community Health noted eliminating Medicaid coverage for mental health would be "absolutely devastating in terms of long-term costs."

In the end, Medicaid winds up paying more for opting not to cover what used to be a cheaper "optional" service.

Reinhart did note two positive developments. Michigan's federal match is on the rise as the state's per-capita income falls in relation to the rest of the country. In 2006 it was some 56 percent. This year it rose to 58 percent. Preliminary estimates have it rising to 60 percent in FY 2009.

"That 2 percent alone saves us \$200 million," Reinhart noted.

A second possible relief valve could be the governor's MI First Health Care Program. The administration hopes that providing a lower-cost health plan with fewer bells and whistles to a population group that is currently just above the eligibility threshold in terms of income will help keep more people from choosing to become Medicaid eligible simply for the coverage.



Jackson Citizen Patriot Live

Monday, February 05, 2007

Teen births, child deaths still high

By Susan J. Demas

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More teens continue to become pregnant and more babies still die in Jackson than in most Michigan counties, new state Department of Community Health data shows.

Jackson ranks the 68th-worst of 83 counties in infant mortality, averaging 9.4 deaths of every 1,000 births.

The state average is 8 per 1,000 births.

In teen pregnancy, the county ranks the 75th-worst of 83 counties, 2005 Kids Count data indicates. Jackson has 73.2 teen pregnancies per 1,000 women, compared to the 52.2 state average, the state reports.

"It's definitely something we're looking at in this community," said Louise Bernstein, coordinator of the Jackson County Health Department's Fetal/Infant Mortality Review program. "We're looking at targeting at-risk groups in education."

For the complete story, return to Mlive.com on Tuesday or pick up a copy of Tuesday's Jackson Citizen Patriot.

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Muskegon Chronicle

Neighbors object to low-income housing proposal

Tuesday, February 06, 2007

By Nancy Stier

CHRONICLE CORRESPONDENT

The popularity of Muskegon Township's proposed Chapel Hill Estates development for low-income families appears to be plummeting.

More than 40 township residents braved icy roads and single-digit temperatures Monday evening to communicate their fears about the impact the subdivision and other suggested development might have on the northwest corner of the township.

The township board meeting had to be moved to Orchard View High School to accommodate the large crowd.

Some citizens said they believed Chapel Hill Estates homes planned for low-income families will increase the area's crime rate and demand for governmental services. Some objected to the proposal that the subdivision of homes priced from \$120,000 to \$150,000 pay a percentage of its net rent to the township, rather than the usual property taxes.

Others were concerned about the effect on wildlife and the environment of the growth proposed for other areas of the northwest corner of the township on a conceptual plan Chapel Hills developer Justin Williams paid architects to draft.

Retired teacher Dan DeCoster told the township board he and his wife own 10 acres at 2013 N. Getty and weren't happy to hear that the conceptual plan earmarks their land for construction of high-density condominiums.

"I will not agree with it," DeCoster said, adding he is upset he knew nothing about the plan before it was publicized in The Chronicle. It is a document township planning commissioners have said they will consider as they adjust the community's master plan for future growth.

Muskegon Township Supervisor Pat Jordan stated numerous times Monday that Chapel Hill Estates developers haven't yet presented a formal proposal the township board can consider, although negotiations are in progress. Jordan told the crowd he is planning to hold the next township board meeting at 7 p.m. Feb. 19 at Reeths-Puffer High School, in case Williams' proposal is ready for consideration by then.

"From what I hear, they're on a fast track to get something to us," Jordan said of developers.

In December, Williams won preliminary plan approval from the Muskegon Township Planning Commission for the first 24 homes suggested for Chapel Hill Estates. He hopes to break ground on the 40-acre subdivision this year, which would be set back from the southwest corner of River Road and N. Getty. Williams, who was raised in Muskegon, but says he now owns a real estate firm in Texas, has indicated he would like to eventually build up to 96 houses at that location.

"We see Chapel Hill Estates as a key to unlocking the development of land that is not being used productively," read the proposal Love at Work Ministries submitted late last year to township officials. The nonprofit housing corporation was formed to build affordable housing by Williams' parents, who are Bishop John Williams, pastor of Church of the Living God, and his wife, JoAnn.

The family hopes to get the development subsidized by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority in order to offer homes to low-income families. One of the first steps toward state approval is to get the township to agree to accept a percentage of the development's net rent collected on the homes, rather than

the usual property taxes.

Residents would need to be considered low income to move into the homes, but wouldn't have to move out when their financial situation improved, according to developers. After paying rent for 15 years, they would have the option to buy their homes, according to Williams.

By building the subsidized subdivision, Williams plans to bring a better road and utility network into that corner of the township, which is now rural.

Williams has said the township asked him to go to the expense of drafting a conceptual plan showing how other portions of the area could eventually be developed if utilities and roads were brought into the area. The plan, to which neighbors now object, was produced by Hooker/DeJong Architects & Engineers of Muskegon and later endorsed in concept by the Reeths-Puffer Neighborhood Improvement Association.

Most neighbors who showed up Monday said they knew nothing about that plan's development when it was in the evolution stage and don't support it.

Nora Johnson, who said she lives at the end of Engman Road, asserted the plan won't ever be accepted by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality because it would disturb state-protected wetlands. She predicted the road shown on the plan to cross Engman Road would require construction of a bridge that the township doesn't have money to finance.

"I do not think the township should even be considering low-income housing," said Brent Arnson, 2130 N. Getty. "Home ownership is expensive and you need to work for it."

Harriet Robbins, 176 Birch Court, said she pays thousands of dollars in property taxes each year to support schools and township services. She told township board members it wouldn't be fair to others like her to allow a nearby development for low-income people an exemption from paying those taxes.

"There is no way on God's green Earth that that is right," Robbins said.

Reeths-Puffer Neighborhood Improvement Association President Ann Oakes sat quietly through Monday's meeting. Afterward, she expressed concern that those who spoke Monday haven't been coming to her association meetings, although they are open to anyone within the Reeths-Puffer School District.

"I'm a little concerned that it looks as if this idea (to offer affordable housing) is dividing the community," Oakes said, adding she wishes the concerns raised Monday had been brought to her association before it recently endorsed Williams' conceptual plan.

Oakes promised to try to get more citizens involved in her organization.

"In no way do we want to increase the crime or make it worse," Oakes said of the association. "We're trying to better the area."

She said she believes it is necessary to bring in roads and utilities to put many landlocked acres of the neighborhood to better use.

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KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

For the poor, subzero weather can be deadly

Tuesday, February 06, 2007

For most people, this week's sub-zero temperatures are an annoyance and an inconvenience.

But for low-income families, the Arctic air parked over Michigan can be life-threatening.

High heating bills can be an expensive aggravation for most families.

But for low-income families, the cost of keeping a home heated forces many to choose between heat and food. And when some families attempt to skimp on heat, using other ways to warm their homes, tragedy is sometimes the result.

The good news is that the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program -- or LIHEAP -- helps low-income families keep their homes warm in a number of ways.

The bad news is that only about 16 percent of families who meet the income criteria to participate -- at 150 percent of the federal poverty level -- took part in the program last year.

Despite the fact that federal funding for LIHEAP has been stagnant, the demand has continued to rise. In Michigan, there were nearly 30,000 more families participating in LIHEAP in fiscal year 2006 than the previous year, bringing the number to 470,670.

Through LIHEAP, low-income families can qualify for Home Heating Credits through the Michigan Department of Treasury. They receive emergency relief when faced with a shut-off notice or need for an energy-related home repair, and participate in the federal weatherization assistance program to improve insulation, install smoke detectors and properly vent appliances.

The Michigan Public Service Commission enacted rules in 2005 to make it easier for families behind on their utility bills to avoid a shut-off. Still, we know that some people who have had their heat and lights shut off for non-payment use inappropriate means to heat and light their homes. The results have sometimes been house fires from unprotected candles and carbon monoxide poisoning from improper ventilation.

Although Michigan winters have been unseasonably warm in recent years, there are dangerous cold snaps. We're in one right now. So we urge area residents to look out for their neighbors, especially senior citizens, who may not be coping well with this weather.

We all certainly know, for those without heating assistance, super-cold weather can be more than dangerous. It can be deadly.

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Cold puts those in need at higher risk

Tuesday, February 06, 2007

By Tarryl Jackson

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With the severe cold that has settled over Jackson, people may experience more than financial pain from rising heating and electric costs.

They can get frostbite and hypothermia if they're not careful.

"If we see someone who needs help, we need to stop and help them get to someplace warm," said Dr. John Maino, medical director of Foote Hospital's emergency room. "This is the time that we need to be good Samaritans."

Near-record cold blanketed Jackson County again this morning. The temperature in Jackson before sunrise was 4 degrees below zero, one degree off the record 5 below set Feb. 6, 1967.

Local nonprofit agencies are trying to make winter's sting less painful.

The Community Action Agency, which receives 300 to 400 calls a week, has seen at least a 25 percent increase in emergency-needs calls in the past week.

More than half of the callers have needed help paying utility bills.

"Some of the bills get so large ! that they're going to need help even into next month's bills," said Brenda Leonard, CAA's community service director for Jackson, Hillsdale and Lenawee counties.

She said CAA and many nonprofits -- like the Salvation Army and United Way -- pool their resources to help pay bills.

The Jackson Interfaith Shelter has enough room in its facility to hold 77 people. As of Monday morning, the shelter housed 23 people.

"Hopefully, people will show up," said the shelter's manager, Kitrina Sims. "Hopefully, they're not sleeping on the streets."

For those who need to escape the cold, Sims said the shelter can also be used as a warming center.

"Our doors are open to everybody," she said.

Brenna Wheeler, manager at Jackson County 211, said she is surprised the helpline has not received more emergency-needs calls in the past week.

It typically receives about 90 to 100 calls a day during January, February and March.

Wheeler said most people need help paying utility bills or are looking for warm places to stay.

"Those basic human needs become a little more needy as the temperature drops," she said. "I'm curious to see what will happen (this week)."



DO IT! Run to keep others warm

February 6, 2007

The City of Detroit Department of Human Services is hosting its 3rd annual Heat the Streets 10K/5K run, beginning at 8 a.m. Saturday at the Boll Family YMCA, 1401 Broadway, Detroit.

Participants will run a 5K course once or twice. Children 12 and younger can participate in the Meltdown 100M.

The event, cosponsored by the Heat and Warmth Fund (THAW), also is part of Detroit's Winter Blast, which features free ice skating at Campus Martius Park, a 200-foot snow slide, ice sculpting and ice skating exhibitions. Race participants will receive a Winter Blast goodie bag, plus a free ride on the snow slide.

Hard Rock Café will serve a breakfast buffet 9:30-11 a.m. Runners will receive a coupon for half off the \$10 fee.

Runners also will win a day pass to the YMCA.

Registration fees are:

- Meltdown 100M: \$10
- 10K run: \$30 before Friday, \$35 on event day.
- 5K run: \$28 before Friday, \$32 on event day.

DTE Energy will match fees and individual contributions. Proceeds will go toward emergency energy assistance for families in Detroit.

For more information, call 313-226-9353, 7 a.m.-7 p.m. weekdays, or go to www.heatthestreets.org.

Angela Lopez, Free Press staff writer

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[Back](#)

Article published Feb 6, 2007

Watchdog facing misdemeanor charge

By Lisa Roose-Church
and Jim Totten

DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

A Brighton woman known for being a government watchdog is facing a misdemeanor charge of operating an unregistered day-care business even though she says she no longer cares for children at her home.

"I don't baby-sit here anymore," said Susan Walters-Steinacker, who has made a name for questioning and investigating local officials. "I baby-sit at their (clients') homes."

On Monday, Walters-Steinacker said she was baffled when a Daily Press & Argus reporter told her she was facing a charge for not registering her in-home day-care business with the state. She said she hasn't cared for children at her home since the start of 2007.

The Livingston County prosecutor's office has charged Walters-Steinacker with violating the state's child-care organizations act, according to Livingston County District Court records. She has been sent a notice of appearance and is expected to be arraigned on the misdemeanor Feb. 28.

If convicted as charged, Walters-Steinacker could face up to 90 days in jail and/or a \$100 to \$1,000 fine.

Prosecutor David Morse said his office initially assumes someone in similar situations may not have been aware that he or she needed to obtain a license or to register with the state. In those cases, the licensing agency will contact the person and give him or her time to come into compliance with state law.

"If they fail to get a license, we take other action," Morse said. "We're not trying to do a 'gotcha.' The licensing agency gives them an opportunity to come into compliance. If not, we assume (not doing so) was intentional."

Chief Tom Wightman of the Brighton Police Department said his office began investigating Walters-Steinacker after state officials said she did not register a possible in-home day-care business. Officers discovered that Walters-Steinacker was providing day-care services for three children from two separate families, the chief said.

In Michigan, anyone who provides day care for one to six unrelated children in a private home for more than four weeks in a year must register with the Department of Human Services, while those who care for seven or more children must apply for a license.

As of December, state regulations also required registered or licensed providers to have their fingerprints scanned for a criminal history and records check completed by Jan. 1.

The process to register requires that family child-care home providers certify to the state that they and their home are in compliance with the rules for family child care homes, according to the DHS' Web site.

Walters-Steinacker said she began the process of applying for a license in September when she learned she needed to register her day care. She's taken a CPR and first-aid course, had her furnace inspected, installed fire extinguishers and undergone a physical exam. She must still complete a day-care course.

Walters-Steinacker said she's spending hundreds of dollars to do "a little bit" of baby-sitting.

"I did everything I'm supposed to be and doing it as fast as I can," she said. "I'm trying to follow the rules."

Morse declined to discuss specifics on the case, noting that it "would be incumbent on the person to notify the agency issuing the license" if circumstances have changed.

"That's how it came to us — it was reported by the licensing agency," Morse explained, noting that the prosecution "doesn't happen in a vacuum; we'll take whatever information is pertinent."



Ford workers meet to keep child care

Angry parents say centers are needed

February 6, 2007

BY SARAH A. WEBSTER

FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

About 100 emotional mothers and fathers -- all Ford Motor Co. employees -- packed into a conference room at the company's Dearborn West family center during their lunch breaks Monday to brainstorm about what they might be able to do to keep seven beloved day care centers open.

They complained about Ford's announcement that it will close the centers, a decision they said is short-sighted and will hurt their productivity.

The Ford-UAW centers serve 900 infants, preschoolers and kindergartners. Five are in Michigan and two more are in Kentucky and Missouri. They are managed by Bright Horizons, a child-care company based in Massachusetts.

On Jan. 26, Ford said it will close the child-care centers in June because the automaker can't afford to subsidize them. The carmaker lost a record \$12.7 billion in 2006 and is undergoing a massive restructuring that will close 16 plants and eliminate 44,000 jobs,

As a result, parents are holding meetings this week in Michigan, Kentucky and Missouri to organize an effort to protest the decision or find an agreeable resolution, such as letting a child-care company assume control of the facilities.

The meeting at Dearborn West was emotional, but focused on trying to save the center.

Ford officials did not attend the parent meeting, but company spokesman Oscar Suris told the Free Press that the carmaker is not going to reconsider its decision. The automaker is exploring selling the family facilities.

"We care about our employees," Suris said. "But we're also at a point in our company's history where we also must make very hard and very difficult decisions to move the company forward."

Suris refused to say how much the facilities cost Ford to operate, and he said the decision to close them was made by the Ford-UAW joint programs office after a cost analysis. He said the company and the union were giving parents time to make alternative arrangements.

"The subsidies were significant enough that we're confident parent involvement would not have made a difference," Suris said.

Most of the parents in attendance are salaried workers at Ford, such as engineers and financial analysts, and many complained about what they view as growing disparities and bad decision-making that continue to erode already-terrible morale.

While Ford is closing its day care centers, they noted that some salaried workers are getting bonuses and Mark Fields, Ford's president of the Americas, was flying home to Florida regularly on a corporate jet. Recently, he gave up the perk after workers and dealers complained.

Parent after parent questioned how they can work the longer hours Ford is requiring as it lays off one-third of its salaried workforce under the Way Forward turnaround plan, if they don't have someone to watch their children.

The Ford centers had longer hours than most child-care facilities, to accommodate the

automaker's hours.

Suris said Ford did not make the decision about the child-care facilities lightly, and it probably explored lost productivity.

The cherished Ford-UAW child-care facilities have waiting lists up to two years long and helped Ford get named to Working Mother Magazine's 100 Best Companies list. Many parents said they have already spent hours of work time trying to locate new day care centers.

One mother suggested the workers stage a sick-out to protest Ford's move.

The parents complained that Ford did not show them or their children any respect because it made the decision without seeking input and delivered the news without any communication that such a move was even under consideration.

Brian Prodin, an employee at the automotive components holdings subsidiary, has two children in the Ford-UAW day care, Conner, 3, and Audrey, 1.

"It's incredibly disruptive," he told the Free Press after the meeting ended. "It doesn't seem like they thought about anything before they did this. ... It could have been handled better."

Contact **SARAH A. WEBSTER** at 313-222-5394 or swebster@freepress.com.

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[Back](#)

Article published Feb 6, 2007

EDITORIAL

Month highlights fathers' influence on kids' lives

You might not be aware that February is Responsible Fatherhood Awareness Month in Michigan. That's not important. What is important is that we recognize the enormous impact fathers can have on the lives of their children, and that we do more to help support men in their roles as fathers.

Unfortunately, too many men in today's society fail to understand the vital role they play in guiding their children toward adulthood. Too many children grow up having little or no contact with their fathers, never benefiting from the tremendous influence that their dad's love, discipline and respect can have in shaping their lives.

That's one of the reasons why the fifth annual Fatherhood Conference is being presented today in Romulus by the Michigan Fatherhood Coalition and the Michigan Head Start Association.

The conference will feature Mac Bledsoe, author of "Parenting with Dignity" and father of Dallas Cowboys quarterback Drew Bledsoe.

Mac Bledsoe preaches a parenting approach that encourages helping children to make their own decisions, and allowing them to experience the consequences of those decisions. Bledsoe emphasizes the importance of teaching values, setting goals, establishing boundaries and giving kids messages of love. All of those duties are as much a father's responsibility as a mother's.

There has been much discussion in recent weeks in our community about the problem of gangs and the negative effects they have on our young people. Fathers can have a tremendous influence in helping to steer children away from gangs and their illegal activities. When there is no dad in the picture, it makes it all the more tempting for young people to turn to gangs for a sense of belonging and purpose.

Being a father requires far more than impregnating a female. A father is someone who takes responsibility for helping to raise a child, who puts the needs of his child ahead of his own desires. But while it can be one of the most rewarding responsibilities we ever face, it also can be overwhelming.

That is why young fathers need the support of the community, and why today's conference in Romulus is underscoring the importance of programs such as Proud Fathers-Proud Parents, funded by the Michigan Department of Human Services and delivered through various community organizations, such as the Community Action Agency of South Central Michigan.

Proud Fathers offers 14 weeks of group-based instruction for fathers or other male caretakers. Proud Parents provides 10 weeks of group-based programming that aims to help married or unmarried couples cope with parenting. The programs both emphasize nurturing relationships between parents and children, and aim to reach people who may never have had the advantage of a stable family life.

Neither program is a silver bullet for the many problems we face in our society. But their common goal of building stronger families is one of the best steps we can take in addressing and resolving those issues. Fathers are an important part of that solution.

Escanaba Daily Press

February 6, 2007

Most people on state aid are honest

EDITOR:

This letter is in response to Mr. Ryan Bernard's letter of Feb. 1 titled "Rules for those on state aid."

Once I got over my indignation at Mr. Bernard's ignorance of what it's like to be poor, I saw this as an opportunity to educate.

Mr. Bernard argues for stringent rules for those receiving assistance for food, shelter and other basic living expenses — rules such as no "fun food," no gambling, random drug and breathalyzer tests and elimination of the Women, Infants and Children food program because "we were provided with a sufficient natural way to nourish our young."

These rules are meant to "embarrass" (his word) the recipients into not utilizing these services. Making the assumption that Mr. Bernard has never benefitted from public assistance, please allow me to enlighten him and others who believe recipients of such help are lazy, worthless, fat drunks who do nothing but gamble and make babies they can't afford.

First, WIC provides nutritional assistance to low-income pregnant women and children up to age 5 and provides coupons for items such as milk, juice and cereal, not just formula.

Upwards of 40 percent of those receiving food stamp assistance are employed at jobs that simply don't pay enough to support a family. About 8 percent are over the age of 60.

Also, many of those participating in the Medicaid and MICHILD health care programs are working full-time at jobs that either do not provide health insurance or require employees to contribute an inordinate amount of income toward premiums.

I could present dozens of facts about these programs, but the point is there are any number of reasons people go on public assistance. To judge these people harshly is unfair and unjust. It is true that some abuse these programs, but how many corporations and wealthy individuals abuse tax and securities rules, thereby stealing millions of dollars from the rest of us? Do the names Enron, Worldcom and Michael Milkin sound familiar?

Rather than making the poor feel worse, how about giving them a hand up instead of bashing them for receiving a handout? How about supporting scholarships and job training programs at institutions such as Bay College? How about assisting a struggling family with child care? How about supporting programs that help those struggling with

substance abuse? How about supporting programs that encourage children to make positive choices that will help them avoid poverty in the future?

I've seen a lot of quotes from the Bible on this page. Here's one more to consider with regard to Jesus' view on how we should treat the poor: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.

"The righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'" Matthew, chapter 25, verses 35-40.

Nancy Barr, Houghton



State departments disregard fiscal responsibility

Saturday, February 03, 2007

By Ron Jelinek

Special To The Press

Michigan is facing one of the biggest budget deficits in recent memory and the task has fallen to the Legislature and the governor's administration to fill the hole or start cutting.

This situation was recently intensified by three state departments that felt it acceptable to violate state law by overspending their budgets by a combined \$69.1 million -- and then not informing the Legislature until almost two months later. The overspending occurred in the Departments of Corrections, Human Services and State Police.

The Michigan Constitution clearly dictates that each state department is provided a specific appropriation limit each year and that is the maximum amount to be spent. If a department spends more money than is allocated, it is in direct violation of both the constitution and state law and they must report the overexpenditure immediately to the Legislature.

However, what makes this situation so egregious is that this overexpenditure was during the fiscal year which ended Sept. 30, 2006, but the Legislature was not informed until Nov. 21. This demonstrates a total lack of fiscal responsibility by the three departments involved and on the governor's administration.

As a result of the length of time it took to report the overexpenditures, the Legislature was not able to remedy the situation before the end of the 2006 legislative year through cuts. This resulted in almost \$70 million carrying over and contributing to the current year's \$800 million deficit. Put another way, this is \$70 million fewer resources that we have to use to help solve the FY 07 deficit.

Michigan residents deserve better than this. In tight fiscal times, Michigan families do what it takes to get by, even if it means giving up a few luxuries. If we're asking families to do this, it is expected that the state do the same. It is unacceptable for any state department to blatantly continue to spend money when it knows there is no money left to spend.

To prevent such irresponsible behavior in the future, the Legislature plans on updating the Management and Budget Act that governs state department budget activities. Creating stricter requirements will provide more accountability and control over each department's expenditures and reporting procedures. It is unfortunate that we have to do this, but it is apparent that we simply can't trust each department to follow the law.

The Legislature also will fill the more than \$69 million hole created by the departments in FY 06 along with the around \$819 million deficit in FY 07. It will not be easy, but we will find the solution that is best for Michigan.

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Granholt Bats .500 In 2006

MIRS, February 5, 2007

Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** is busy preparing for her fifth State of the State address, but around half of the proposals she laid out in last year's address have yet to be implemented, joining a number of prior proposals that either never got off the ground or faded away quickly after implementation.

With the exception of the 2005 State of the State address, when all but one of her proposals saw some level of success, the Governor is batting roughly .500 on seeing her annual proposals get off the ground and actually stay up in the air.

Granholt proposed 22 new programs or expansions in 2006 and, according to the *MIRS* count, completed 11 of them. The other 11 either aren't ready, died because of partisan differences or the idea never got off the ground. From 2005-2003, she's proposed 43 different programs, of which 26 appear to have been fully implemented.

"Every year, the Governor sets in place a blueprint for the year ahead and every year we set the bar high," said Granholt Press Secretary Liz **BOYD**, noting that the Democratic Governor has found herself working with a Republican House and Senate the last four years and that to go .500 in an Election year is noteworthy.

"I want to emphasize that .500 is never good enough, but if you are in the Big Leagues and you're batting .500, you're headed to the Hall of Fame."

The Governor's shining accomplishment was the 21st Century Jobs fund proposal of 2005 that resulted in the Legislature passing, in theory, a \$1 billion fund for emerging technologies. She also saw through a minimum wage increase, Project Great Start (2003) and Regional Skills Alliances (2004).

But other ideas that died for one reason or the other include the requirement that students complete 40 hours of community service before receiving the Merit Scholarship (2004), the extra financial assistance for school districts that adopt high-expectations curriculums (2005) and raising the drop out age to 18 (2003).

In other cases, gauging the success is completely relative. The administration put the groundwork together for Jobs Today in 2005, but the Legislature never approved a large number of the bills designed to implement the speed-up of \$800 million in new projects. Her "Third Share Partnership," in which job providers, employees and the state would go in together to take care of the uninsured's health care (2004) has not been successful. And the Great Lakes, Great Hopes scholarships stalled.

"This is why the Governor lacks creditability with her proposals because they have tended to wither on the vine," said Ari **ADLER** of John Bailey & Associates, former spokesman of the Republican Senate Majority Leader. "They develop an idea to the extent they can write a press release but don't have enough details to implement a program. When they start to fill in the details, that's when they crushed under their own weight."

In 2006, Granholt's top accomplishments included a minimum wage increase, getting her Merit Award Scholarship passed, cracking down on methamphetamines and signing a bill increasing high school graduation requirements.

Her other accomplishments include centralizing medical records, increasing the size of preschool programs for four-year-olds, getting increased heating funding for poor people and requiring criminal background checks for elder care and nursing home employees.

She also increased regulations for corporations that keep sensitive personal information in their systems. She put this in place to protect people against identity theft. Granholt's other identity theft pledges —

allowing people to freeze credit reports in the event of ID theft and creating new penalties for those who break this law — did not pass.

During her 2006 State of the State Granholm said, "In the budget I'll introduce next month, I'll call for a significant new investment in education and I'll focus that investment on student learning."

This turned into an appropriation that gave a \$210 per pupil spending increase to the School Aid Fund. Right now that's one of Granholm's accomplishments, but it's unknown if that extra funding will get chopped as part of the push to make up the \$800 million state budget deficit.

The last thing Granholm can check off her 2006 State of the State address checklist is the Steps Up Initiative. This was a public relations effort through the Surgeon General's office to get Michigainians excited about and involved in healthy eating and exercise habits.

"I think Michigan, at this point, is expecting more," said Jason **BREWER**, spokesman for the House Republicans. "We can't afford to drop the ball on any initiative at this point."

Brewer gave Granholm a C for failing to complete half of what she proposed to do in last year's State of the State address. The two biggest plans Granholm hasn't completed are her MI First Health Care Plan and her MI Retirement Program (See "[What Happened To The MI Retirement Program?](#)" 1/29/06).

Both of the initiatives are brand new, but neither has been completed. Initially, Granholm said she wanted the health care plan up and going by April 2007. This program would offer affordable health care to the state's poorest citizens. It's possible that this program will make the April deadline, but it's unlikely.

However, this program isn't a total loss because the Governor has been working with the federal government to get a critical funding waiver that would allow this program to move. Other states that have gone after a similar waiver have had to wait up to two years to get a nod from the federal government.

The MI Retirement Program hasn't gone anywhere. It was taken up in one Senate committee last February, but that's it. Both the House and the Senate have introduced bills to get this program back in the committee loop.

Other 2006 initiatives that weren't completed include: Removing limits on stem cell research, implementing anti-bullying laws, requiring schools to immediately tell parents when their kids are missing school or falling behind in school, rolling back insurance rates by 20 percent, giving penalties for companies that don't give service members their jobs back when they return from service and implementing election reform.

Granholm also called for a national cap on oil company profits, which didn't happen, though there was really little she could do about it.

"If wishes were ponies, you'd have to scrap your shoes off every time you stepped into Lansing," Adler said. "And it's not about being partisan or mean-spirited. Plans were developed before they were ready or without the Legislature being engaged."

2005 SOS accomplishments — 21st Century Jobs Fund, revamped Merit Award, minimum wage increase, establishment of Early Childhood Investment Corporation, legislation on graphic video games

2005 SOS maybe — Jobs Today (several bills introduced never passed)

2005 SOS dead-ends — Financial assistance to school districts that adopt high expectations

2004 SOS accomplishments — Letter asking Washington for Unemployment Insurance benefits, Emerging Business Fund creation, Venture Michigan Fund creation, Regional Skills Alliance creation, make READY kits available, ask ISDs to create Learn to Earn centers, new trash restrictions, end predatory lending, create

Elder Abuse Task Force, create Principal Academy, Michigan Prescription Discount, five new federally qualified Health Centers, sign up 25,000 kids for health insurance

2004 SOS maybe — Third Share Partnership

2004 SOS no — Create a One Stop Shop for business, Small Business Growth Fund, zero percent loans available to students who pursue engineering and technology degrees, Merit Scholarship for those with 40 volunteer hours, credit scoring legislation, stiff penalties for get-rich-quick schemes and creation of 20 Family Resource Centers in a year (19 total established since address)

2003 SOS yes — Constituent Services Division, Technology Tri-Corridor establishment, Project Great Start, 40 Hours of Community Service, prevent some solid waste from entering landfills, water protection legislation, Commission on Land Use establishment, Homeland Security advisor

2003 SOS maybe — Governor's Education Technology Fund, Children's Action Network (renamed ECIC)

2003 SOS no — Early childhood centers in high schools to supply reading to young children, raise drop out age to 18, Great Lakes/Great Hopes scholarships



News Release

Contact: Yasmin Green at (517) 371-9000, ext. 201

Eastern Upper Peninsula collaborative receives \$120,000 Great Start Collaborative grant

Early Childhood Investment Corporation grants focus on early childhood development and care

February 6, 2007

SAULT STE. MARIE – The Eastern Upper Peninsula Great Start Collaborative today accepted a \$120,000 grant from the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) to strengthen early childhood development and care in the region.

ECIC CEO Judy Samelson presented a ceremonial check to Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate School District Superintendent Peter Everson and Collaborative Coordinator Gary Davis.

The grant is part of a \$3.15 million award to 21 Great Start Collaboratives across Michigan that coordinate community resources and supports to help children from birth to age five and their families. A total of 70 percent of Michigan's poor and minority children now live in a county where a Great Start Collaborative is being convened.

The Early Childhood Investment Corporation, announced in Governor Jennifer Granholm's 2005 State of the State address, provides grants from a mix of public and private funding sources. Grant funding was made possible in August 2006 when the Michigan Legislature approved a \$1 million appropriation for early childhood collaboratives across the state. This appropriation triggered matching funds from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

In total, 21 collaboratives have been funded by the Early Childhood Investment Corporation; 14 in January 2006, and seven in October 2006.

"These grants will help bring together the public and private sectors including government, business, civic, faith, education, and community groups to develop a long-standing, sustained focus on early learning and childhood development," Samelson said. "We're grateful for the support of our partners who recognize the importance of investing in early childhood programs."

Intermediate school districts will act as fiduciaries for the grants. In addition to the Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate School District, 21 intermediate school districts and regional education service agencies around the state also were awarded funding for planning and/or implementation of Great Start Collaboratives.

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“Children who participate in high-quality early childhood development programs are better prepared to enter elementary school, are more likely to pursue secondary education and have lower dropout rates and higher high school graduation rates,” said Marianne Udow, Department of Human Services director. “By improving the skills of a large fraction of the workforce, these programs for poor children will reduce poverty and strengthen the state’s ability to compete in the global market.”

ECIC is a unique public, nonprofit corporation created to invest in Michigan’s youngest citizens. By educating, motivating and involving Michigan citizens in efforts to build and promote a system of supports for young children and their families, all Michigan children can make a Great Start!

For more information about the ECIC, visit <http://www.ecic4kids.org>

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JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

News Release

Contact: Maureen Sorbet or Karen Stock (517) 373-7394

Udow honored as 2007 Michigan Fatherhood Coalition Child Advocate

February 6, 2007

ROMULUS – DHS Director Marianne Udow today accepted the 2007 Child Advocate Award from the Michigan Fatherhood Coalition. The award honors individuals who make substantial contributions that promote responsible fatherhood.

Udow was singled out for her commitment to funding and expanding the Proud Fathers-Proud Parents programs that provide funds for community agencies to deliver group-based instruction about responsible male parenting, promoting healthy marriages and co-parenting efforts. The program will disburse about \$1 million from federal TANF funds during fiscal year 2007 to 22 counties.

"I am honored to be recognized," Udow said. "Fathers provide a critical influence in their children's lives. The Proud Fathers and Proud Parents programs give parents the tools to improve outcomes for their children. Even if they don't live together, parents are connected by their care and concern for their children."

The Michigan Fatherhood Coalition honored Udow and other policy leaders at its fifth annual Fatherhood Conference. The non-profit organization promotes the need for responsible male parenting and positive co-parenting relationships through a network of private and public practitioners who offer programming. Nancy Willyard of the Head Start State Collaboration Office also was awarded a 2007 Child Advocate Award for the organization's support of scholarships to attend the Michigan Fatherhood Coalition's annual conference.

"The Department of Human Services' Proud Fathers-Proud Parents Program is a great contribution to this state's promotion of healthy and independent families," said Mike Kildee, chair of the Michigan Fatherhood Coalition. "Your effort to maintain this programming, despite difficult budget times, greatly impacts Michigan children."

Proud Fathers provides 14-weeks of group-based instruction for fathers or other male caretakers of children who qualify for TANF services. Proud Parents offers a 10-week, group-based program designed for married or unmarried couples. Both programs stress the importance of nurturing relationships between parents and children as well as family self-sufficiency. In 2006, 297 parents in 19 counties participated in the two programs.

For more information go to www.michigan.gov/dhs